DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 257 794 SP 026 038

AUTHOR Clark, D. Cecil; And Others
TITLE Supervisors' Feedback to Student Teachers.
PUB DATE [84]
NOTE 24p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Feedback; Higher Education; Interpersonal Relationship; Preservice Teacher Education; *Student Evaluation; *Student Teachers; *Student Teacher Supervisors; Supervisory Methods; Teaching Skills

ABSTRACT

This study identified the nature of the feedback supervisors give student teachers when they observe and evaluate their teaching performance. Twenty-two supervisors in the department of elementary education in a large university participated in the study. A random sample of at least three student teachers was sought from each supervisor; the final total was 63. The supervisors filled out an observation record for each observation of a student teacher. Examples of types of comments made by supervisors in the following areas are described: (1) teaching style; (2) teaching method; (3) knowledge of subject; (4) personal appearance; (5) discipline; (6) student on-task behavior; (7) teacher-student relationship; (8) lesson management; (9) transitions; (10) teaching materials; and (11) overall summary of performance. The supervisors' comments about student teachers were found to be overwhelmingly positive. The reasons why this should be the case are discussed, and it is suggested that supervisors should offer more than just supportive reinforcement to student teachers in the light of the emerging body of knowledge about effective teaching. A six-page bibliography concludes the document. (JD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

RMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
TERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

D.C.Clark

THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
ORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Supervisors' Feedback to Student Teachers

D. Cecil Clark
Ralph B. Smith
Richard A. Thurman
James E. Baird

Brigham Young University

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

✓ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

ED237794

The role of the university supervisor has been and continues to be enigmatic to teacher educators. Within every college of education one hears a range of reactions. A few faculty members claim striking successes. Many are uncertain about their influence. Others are chronically frustrated by having to compete with cooperating teachers. Still others are disillusioned, openly acknowledging the impotence of their role.

Writers have worked to identify the roles and responsibilities of the supervisor (e.g. Abrell, 1974; Griswold et al, 1981; Neal, Kraft & Kracht, 1968; Strugess, 1978; Zeichner & Tabachnick, 1982; Zimpher et al, 1980). Some have argued that the traditional role is outdated (e.g. Ellenburg, 1981; Kilgore, 1979; Kline & Dale, 1975; McIntyre & Norris, 1980; Monson, 1970; Morris, 1980; Patty, 1973). Others have suggested how this role can be carried out more effectively (e.g. Boyan & Copeland, 1974; Copeland, 1981; Hogan, 1983; Joyce & Showers, 1981). A few studies have attempted to assess the impact of the university supervisor (e.g. Lowther, 1968; Martin, Isherwood & Raphgna, 1978; Morris, 1974: Price, 1961). Some studies suggest the supervisor has little if any impact on the student teacher's

behavior (e.g. Clark, 1984; Boschee, Prescott & Hein, 1978; Bowman, 1979; Kimmel & Silverman, 1977; Martin, Isherwood & Raphgna, 1978; Morris, 1974; Stewig, 1974). Other studies have examined the effectiveness of different types of supervisory methods (e.g. James, 1971: Johnston, 1969).

Concurrently, there has been research on feedback and its impact in producing teacher change. The effect of student ratings of instruction on university instructors has been extensively studied (e.g. Centra, 1973; Cohen, 1980; Overall & Marsh, 1979; Rotem & Glasman, 1979). Further, the effect of videotape and microteaching feedback in the preservice training of teachers has been studied (e.g. Frank & Samaniego, 1981; Fuller & Manning, 1973; Huber & Ward, 1969; Salomon & McDonald, 1970; Star, 1979). Few studies, however, have focussed on feedback given by the university supervisor to the student teacher.

This study was the first in a series designed to empirically portray what supervisors actually do when they go into the schools and supervise student teachers. The purpose of the study was to identify the nature of the feedback supervisors give student teachers when they observe and evaluate their teaching. Specifically, two questions were asked: 1) In what areas do supervisors make comments about performance? (Is it a comment about teaching style, about the student teacher's appearance, discipline, relationships with students?) 2) What types of

comments are made? (Does the comment point out a strength, a weakness, or is it merely a suggestion?)

PROCEDURE

In a College of Education at a large university, there are thirty full-time faculty in the Department of Elementary Educatio.. Twenty-two of these were supervising student teachers during the semester the study was conducted. All twenty-two vounteered to allow researchers access to their records of student teaching visits. The number of student teachers each faculty member supervised over this two-block semester ranged from one to thirteen, with an average of about four. A random sample of at least three student teachers was selected from each supervisor, totalling 63.

Each time a faculty member visited and observed a student teacher, he or she filled out an "Observation Record" on the student. The observation record was sectioned into four categories allowing the supervisor to enter comments in each, which were: Teacher Example, Student Control, Designing/Presenting, and Use of Resources.

From two to six observations (visits) were made on each student teacher by his or her supervisor. For the 63 student teachers in the sample, 275 observation records were filled out. These 275 records yielded 3,916 total comments by the twenty-two faculty supervisors (2,975 when the "Miscellaneous" category is excluded). A "comment" was any phrase, grouping of words, or a

complete statement which was intended to convey some thought or meaning to the student teacher. Further, it was separated in some way from other groupings of words or phrases. For example, a "comment" could be any of the following: "Good job," "Try to move at a slower pace when you explain these concepts," "A need to prepare more carefully," "Seems tired today."

Each comment was evaluated along two dimensions, area and type. First, in what area was the comment made? Was it a comment about the student's teaching style, knowledge of the subject being taught, appearance, discipline of the students, way of relating to students? Second, what type of comment was it? Did the comment indicate what the student teacher was doing well, or was it about something that needed to be improved? Was it a straightforward suggestion, or was it a neutral statement? Finally, the total number of words written on each observation record were recorded. This yielded information about the amount of written feedback being provided to the student teacher.

The categorizing system developed by Cicerelli (1969) was adapted for use in the present study. A large sample of comments was pulled from observation reports filled out by supervisors the semester prior to the study. Each comment was studied, then assigned to an initial category into which it seemed to fit. As more comments were analyzed and grouped, some of the original categories were renamed, extended, and often split into new categories. Gradually, the identification of categories

stabilized and their names firmed up. Eleven categories finally emerged, along with a separate "miscellaneous" category.

In the process of categorizing by area, each comment was also categorized by type. The question was asked, "Does this statement indicate that the student teacher is weak in some area and needs to improve, or does it point out a strength?" A comment was now placed in either a "Strength" or a "Weakness" category. For example, "Nice job with that transition" would go in the former and "You let the students become too noisy" would be assigned to the latter. Often, a supervisor would point out neither a strength nor a weakness, but would offer the student teacher a suggestion. For example, "Try to be more assertive." Thus, a "Suggestion" category was created. Finally, the remainder of the comments were placed in a "Miscellaneous" category. Comments in this category were varied in nature, but all had the characteristic of not being directly related to the student teacher's performance. Some were administrative comments such as: "Bring me your midterm evaluation." "Thanks for coordinating my visit with the other student teachers." "Don't forget to bring in the tape tomorrow." Some were cues to the supervisor herself: "Students now coming back from the library." "The rowdy boy is in this class." "There are fifteen students in the module." Some were the supervisor's informal script-taping, resembling a classroom narrative: Teacher asks--"Whose house did Huck come to?"--several students reply--"The plantation" --teacher helps them out--teacher waits

for an answer--does not come--she asks--"What was at the hole in the swamp?"--all students reply in unison--"Jim"--teacher the starts reading the story.

Each comment, then, was classified by area and type. This yielded an 11 by 3 matrix, 11 areas in which comments were made and 3 types. After this matrix had been stabilized through categorizing comments from earlier observation reports, it was then used for the study itself. A doctoral student in the program conducted both preliminary and target classifying. About 90& of the encountered comments could be instantly classified by both area and type. Still, no reliability-of-categorizing estimates were obtained for area or type. Likewise, the validity of supervisor comments--in terms of their accuracy or efficacy--was not determined. This was a pilot study in which the authors were interested in an approximate portrayal of written comments made by supervisors as they visited student teachers.

Areas in which comments were made, and examples of types of comments are described below:

TEACHING STYLE

Comments in this category referred to the student teacher's grace or presence, and included areas of enthusiasm, confidence, morale, and voice modulation. For example, one might find such comments as: "Good attitude, calm but expectant." (strength) "You seem excited about the subject, good!" (strength) "Your confidence shows through well today." (strength) "If you would

talk a little more excitedly about things, it would help."(suggestion) "Don't act worried, the students can pick up on it." (suggestions) "You don't seem very confident today." (weakness) "You don't seem too enthused about teaching today." (weakness)

TEACHING METHOD

These comments referred to techniques used by the teacher as he or she taught, including methods of motivation, use of questions, procedure for evaluation, and ways reinforcement took place. Examples would be: "Using lots of questions to generate discussion--good." (strength) "You are asking lots of questions--good." (strength) "You need to lead the students more in the discussion." (suggestion) "Using praise would be helpful here." (suggestion) "Have you thought about using small-group discussion?" (suggestion) "You are telling them the answers too quickly--they should think about them first." (weakness)

KNOWLEDGE OF SUBJECT

These comments referred to the correctness or accuracy of the content material being taught by the student teacher. For example, the supervisor might write, "Texas was not a slave state, it was an independent country." (weakness) "You need to work more on your spelling." (suggestion) "A whale is not a fish." (weakness) "You seem to know the subject well." (strength) "Its obvious you studied it out well--Good." (strength)

APPEARANCE

These comments were about the student teacher's manner of dress and general appearance. Examples might be: "You look very nice today." (strength) "Nice clothes," (strength) "Good that you dressed in jeans for today's activity." (strength)

DISCIPLINE

Comments in this category referred to the student teacher's ability to manage the class and maintain control of student behaviors. Examples would be:

"There were several kids playing with things on their desks--what did you do about it? You picked up on it--good!" (strength) "You had good control of the class today." (strength) "Two girls in the back were talking and you didn't do anything about it." (weakness) "You are trying to be too stern." (weakness) "Try to keep better control--write their names on the board if necessary." (suggestion) "You may need to separate those two boys to keep them quiet." (suggestion)

STUDENT ON TASK BEHAVIOR

Comments here were about the student teacher's ability to keep the students engaged in academic work. Examples would be: "Some girls kept drifting off and doing other things while you were talking." (weakness) "Good job keeping the students working today." (strength) "Try walking around the room more during seatwork." (suggestion) "Everyone is in their seat and working--Good." (strength) "When you give them things to color, look over their shoulders once in a while. It will keep them

going instead of talking." (suggestion) "Students were visiting instead of doing their work." (weakness)

TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

Comments placed in this category dealt with the student teacher's interaction with students, and his or her general rapport with them. Examples here might be: "The students like you." (strength) "You have a good way of relating to students." (strength) "You seem to like the students." (strength) "Try to get to know them better." (suggestions) "Make sure you learn the students' names." (suggestions)

LESSON MANAGEMENT

Comments in this category were directed at the student teacher's lesson plans and how well they were being carried out. Examples placed into this category would be: "Need a little more detail on lesson plans." (suggestion) "You followed your lesson plan closely." (strength) "You did not have a lesson plan today." (weakness) "The lesson plan looks very organized." (strength) "Try writing your plans the day before you teach, it will help." (suggestion)

TRANSITIONS

These comments were about the student teacher's overall ability to manage and control the class during non teaching times, and times when students were moving from one activity to another. Examples would be: "Good transition from recess to class." (strength) "Your students were too noisy coming back from the library." (weakness) "You moved from reading to math

well today." (strength) "Keep track of them, they are your responsibility." (suggestion) "Try a story just after lunch. It may quiet them down a bit." (suggestion) "You are taking too long between activities." (weakness) "I was afraid you were going to lose some of the kids on the way back from the media center." (weakness)

TEACHING MATERIALS

These comments were aimed at the student teacher's use of resource materials, such as chalkboard, handouts, overhead projector and posters. Examples here might be: "Excellent use of visual aids." (strength) "You used the board well." (strength) "Your dittos were not very clear--what other kinds of materials could you have used?" (weakness) "Use and overhead projector. Then you won't have to turn your back on the class." (suggestion) "Use more visual aids." (suggestion) "Poster too small." (weakness)

SUMMARIZING COMMENTS

These comments were short summary statements about the overall performance of the student teacher. They were not usually directed at any specific action of the student teacher. Examples here might be: "Good job." "Nice." "Super." (all strengths).

RESULTS

The minimum number of words written on each observation report was 11, the maximum 300, and the average, 127. There were, on the average, about 14 comments per observation report, and each comment averaged about nine words. The correlation between the number of words on an observation report and the number of different comments made was .39. Thus, there was not a particularly strong relationship between the amount written and the number of different comments. A detailed observation report was conveying no more ideas or suggestions than was a less detailed one.

Table 1 shows that 85% (2,525 of 2,975) of the comments pointed out strengths in the student teachers, 11% (344 of 2,975) were suggestions, and 4% (116 of 2,975) were weaknesses. Overwhelmingly, then, supervisors were writing down strengths, offering not many suggestions, and pointing out few, if any, weaknesses.

Table 1 further shows that <u>all</u> comments about student "Appearance" were strengths. This was likewise true of <u>all</u> "Summarizing Comments."

Figure 1 shows in what areas suggestions and weaknesses were most frequently pointed out. Most of the suggestions occurred in "Teaching Method," followed by "Discipline," "Transitions," and "Teaching Materials." Most of the weaknesses were identified in the student teacher's "Knowledge of the Subject," followed by

their "Transitions," "Discipline," and "Lesson Management." Even so, both suggestions and weaknesses were dwarfed in comparison to the strengths identified in each areas.

The "Miscellaneous" category--a variety of comments not directly related to the student teacher's performance--contained 941 or about 24% of the 3,916 total comments recorded.

DISCUSSION

Clearly, the supervisors' comments about student teaching are overwhelmingly positive. About eleven percent of the comments were suggestions, and only four percent identified weaknesses. While such findings are not terribly surprising, they are difficult to interpret, in productive ways.

For years, writers have labelled education a "benign" profession, and one might argue these data support that claim. Supervisors in our sample were providing ample positive reinforcement and probably saw their role as nurturing and supportive. These data may simply reflect the supervisor's perception of his or her role. But this interpretation is of little help. It carries no implications for the improvement of supervision, and it would be a discouraging conclusion for educators working on reform.

Another possibility is that these students are already performing as effective teachers, and supervisors are able to observe this. If such is the case, either already-qualified students are entering the program, or average students are being well trained by the program--or both. Selection into the program

may indeed be at work. Even though less academically able students are applying to teacher education programs, they may be more skillful in working with young children (Smith, 1984). During early field experience supervision, the senior author has interviewed over two hundred elementary education majors. Many come from families whose mother or father have been in the teaching profession. Most of the students have wanted to teach since early childhood, probably because they have developed some"natural talent" in working with children. In areas like classroom management and presentation of concepts, the student teachers probably possesses an already-present repertoire. Since kindergarten, they have attended classes and observed teachers, accumulating a set of practices which have remained dormant until awakened through student teaching. Thus, to the supervisors, these students came across as generally mature teachers.

The other possibility is that the program was persuasively effective in developing skills through coursework and earlier field experiences--so that now, during student teaching, students demonstrate effective teaching behaviors. From the folk wisdom of the profession, and from at least some studies which have evaluated teacher education programs, this is not a very plausible explanation. Even if training were above average, one would still expect far more suggestions and weaknesses than were found on the observation reports.

Another explanation is that the supervisors' knowledge of effective teaching was functioning near its limit. Based on this knowledge, there may have been no more to observe--as they viewed the students. Because they could identify no more weaknesses, and therefore offer no more suggestions, the only other alternative was to give positive reinforcement. Suppose a supervisor had, in essence, exhausted his "list" of what effective student teachers ought to be doing. The only comments left to offer would be "good job," or "I liked the way you kept control during the transitions today."

Another explanation is that the supervisors were committed to the use of positive reinforcement as a theory of teacher development. The reasoning might be as follows: "I could see a number of different things I might have commented on, but the most important thing I can do is to give the student positive support--that's what they really need. Most of their learning will take place once they have their own classrooms."

But all these explanations may indeed miss the point as far as improving supervision goes. The University spends approximately $100 for a full-time faculty member to travel out and spend one hour with a student teacher--an expensive enterprise. Even if methodological weaknesses and the relatively small sample sizes are taken into account, these data are quite unmistakable: Few weaknesses were pointed out and few suggestions were given. Inevitable questions arise: How much corrective and instructive feedback ought supervisors to give in the expensive

process of training student teachers? Ought not supervisors be expected to offer more than supportive reinforcement in light of the emerging body of knowledge about effective teaching? Clearly, the answer is yes. Then the more fundamental question: Under what conditions are faculty supervisors most likely to change their perception of their roles?

Table 1

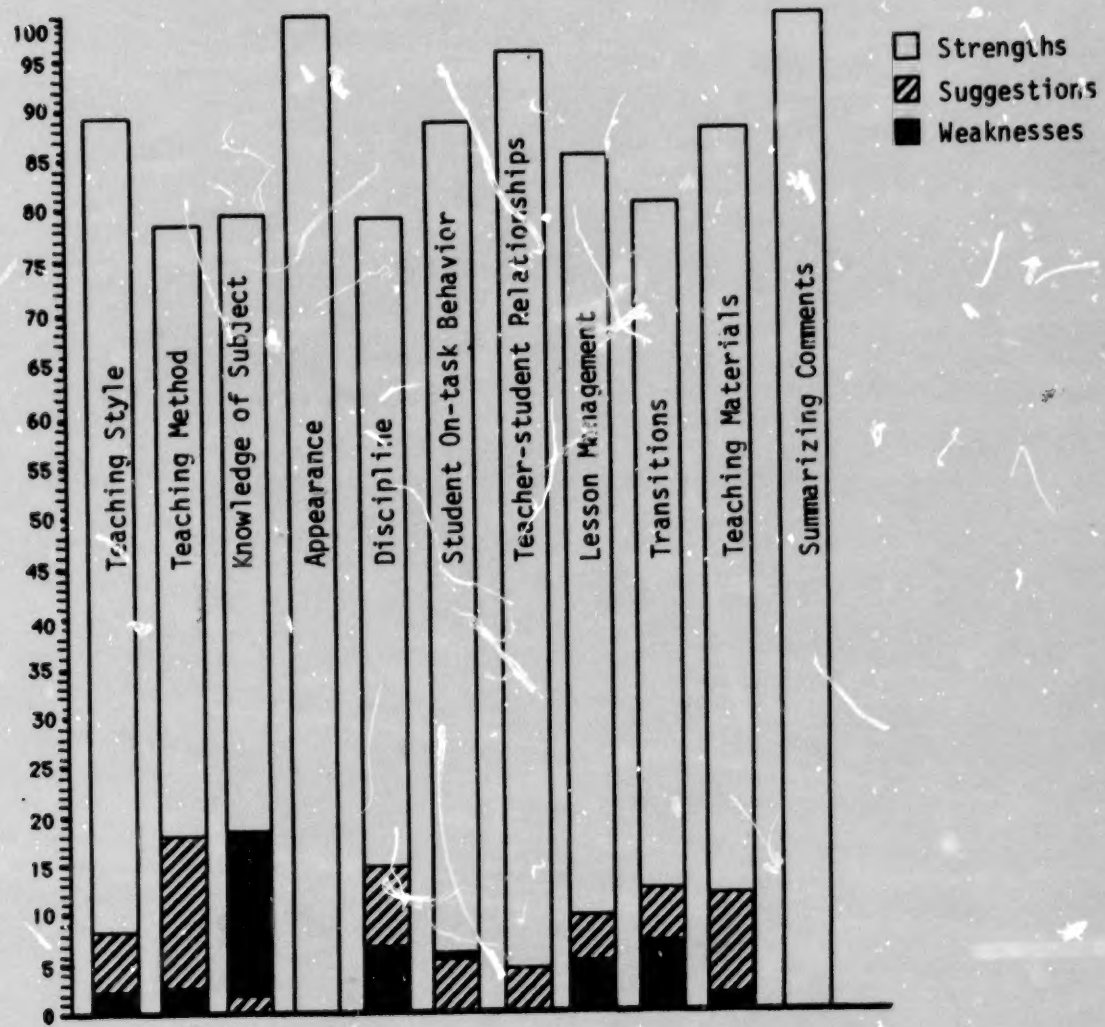
Frequencies and Percentages of Comments by Area and Type

Area	Type			
	Strengths f (%)	Suggestions f (%)	Weaknesses f (%)	Total f (%)
Teaching Style	323 (89.7)	29 (8.1)	8 (2.2)	360 (100)
Teaching Method	589 (79.3)	134 (16.0)	20 (2.7)	743 (100)
Knowledge of Subject	43 (79.6)	1 (1.9)	10 (18.5)	54 (100)
Appearance	94 (100)	0	0	94 (100)
Discipline	269 (78.9)	49 (14.4)	23 (6.7)	341 (100)
Student On-task Behavior	206 (88.8)	12 (5.2)	14 (6.0)	232 (100)
Teacher-student Relationships	90 (95.7)	4 (4.3)	0	94 (100)
Lesson Management	287 (85.2)	33 (9.8)	17 (5.0)	337 (100)
Transitions	218 (80.7)	33 (12.2)	19 (7.1)	270 (100)
Teaching Materials	306 (87.4)	39 (11.2)	5 (1.4)	350 (100)
Summarizing Comments	100 (100)	0	0	100 (100)
Total	2525 (85)	334 (11)	116 (4)	2975 (100)

Figure 1

Percentages of Strengths,

Suggestions and Weaknesses by Area



References

Abrell, R. L. (1974). The humanistic supervisor enhances growth and improves instruction. Educational Leadership, 32, 212-216.

Boschee, F., Prescott, D.R. & Hein, D. D. (1978). Do cooperating teachers influence the educational philosophy of student teachers? Journal of Teacher Education, 29, 57-61.

Bowman, N. (1979). College supervision of student teaching: A time to reconsider. Journal of Teacher Education, 30, 29-30.

Boyan, N. J. & Copeland, W. D. (1974). A training program for supervisors: Anatomy of an educational development. Journal of Educational Research, 68, 100-116.

Centra, J. F. (1973). Effectiveness of student feedback in modifying college instruction. Journal of Educational Psychology, 55(3), 395-401.

Cicerelli, V.G. (1969). University supervisors' creative ability and their appraisal of student teachers' classroom performance: An exploratory study. Journal of Educational Research, 62(8), 375-381.

Clark, D. [illegible] (1984). Origins of teaching behaviors of first-year and student teachers. (In press).

Cohen, P. A. (1980). Effectiveness of student-rating feedback for improving college instruction: A meta-analysis of findings. Research for Higher Education, 13, 321-341.

Copeland, W. D. (1981). Clinical experiences in the education of teachers. Journal of Education For Teaching, 7(3), 3-16.

Ellenberg, F. E. (1981). You can pay me now or you can pay me later. The Clearing House, 54, 200-205.

Frank, M. & Samaniego, F. (1981). The supervision of teaching assistants: A new use of videotape. Modern Language Journal, 65, 273-280.

Fuller, F. F. & Manning, B. A. (1973). Self-confrontation reviewed: A conceptualization for video playback in teacher education. Review of Educational Research, 43(4), 469-528.

Griswold, K. et al. (1981). Preservice teacher education content, organization and field experiences. ERIC ED 219 380.

Hogan, P. (1983). The central place of prejudice in the supervision

of student teachers. Journal of Education For Teaching, 9, 30-45.

Huber, J. & Ward, B. (1969). Pre-service confidence through microteaching. Education, 90, 65-68.

James, H. H. (1971). Effects of supervisory methods upon development of a teaching strategy by student teachers. Journal of Research in Science Teaching, 8, 4, 335-338.

Johnston, D. P. (1969). The relationship of self-supervision to change in selected attitudes and behaviors of secondary student teachers. Educational Leadership, 27(1), 57-63.

Joyce, B. & Showers, B. (1981). Transfer of training: The contribution of coaching. Journal of Education, 163(2), 163-72.

Kilgore, A. M. (1979). Pilot project shows definite link between pre-, in-service education. Journal of Teacher Education, 30, 10-12.

Kimmel, E. & Silverman, S. (1977). Faculty observation of teachers in training: Reliability and cost. Improving College and University Teaching, 25, 4, 237-239.

Kline, W. A. & Dale, L. (1975). A modest proposal for changing teacher education. Teachers College Record, 77, 99-106.

Lowther, M. A. (1968). Most and least helpful activities of supervising teachers. Clearing House, 43, 40-43.

Martin, Y., Isherwood, G. & Raphgna, S. (1978). Supervisory effectiveness. Educational Administration Quarterly, 14, 74-88.

McIntyre, D. J., Norris, W. R. (1980). The state of the art of preservice teacher education programs and supervision of field experiences. Action in Teacher Education, 2, 67-69.

Monson, J. A. (1970). New roles for the supervisor of student teaching. Educational Leadership, 28, 44-47.

Morris, J. E. (1980). Evaluating the effectiveness of the university supervisor of student teachers: Role of the coordinator of field experiences. Peabody Journal of Education, 57, 148-151.

Morris, J. R. (1974). The effects of the university supervisor on the performance and adjustment of student teachers. The Journal of Educational Research, 67(8), 358-362.

Neal, C. D., Kraft, L. E. & Kracht, C. R. (1968). Reasons for college

supervision of the student-teaching program. Journal of Teacher Education, 18, 24-27.

Overall, J. U. & Marsh, H. W. (1979). Midterm feedback from students: Its relationship to instructional improvement and student's cognitive and affective outcomes. Journal of Educational Psychology, 71, 856-865.

Patty, A. H. (1973). Classroom teachers will replace college supervisors. Contemporary Education, 44, 179-183.

Price, W. (1961). The influence of supervising teachers. Journal of Teacher Education, 12, 471-475.

Rotem, A. & Glasman, N. (1979). On the effectiveness of students' evaluative feedback to university instructors. Review of Educational Research, 49(3), 497-511.

Smith, B. O. (1983). Some comments on educational research in the twentieth century. The Elementary School Journal, 83(4), 488-491.

Solomon, G. & McDonald, F. J. (1970). Pretest and posttest reactions to self-viewing one's teaching performance on video tape. Journal of Educational Psychology, 61, 280-286.

Star, B. (1979). Exploring the boundaries of videotape self-confrontation. Journal of Education For Social Work, 15(1), 87-94.

Stewig, J. W. (1970). What should college supervisors do? Journal of Teacher Education, 21(2), 251-257.

Sturges, A. (Ed) (1978). Roles and responsibilities of instructional supervisors. ERIC ED 165 261.

Zeichner, K. M. & Tabachnick, B. R. (1982). The belief systems of university supervisors in an elementary student-teaching program. Journal of Education For Teaching, 8, 34-54.

Zimpher, N. L. et al. (1980). A closer look at the university student teacher supervision. Journal of Teacher Education, 31, 11-15.